(No. 49 Aug. 1998)

Identification

Identify those employees whose performance has been declining and begin appropriate action. Anyone can have "bad days" when performance slips, and most people generally perform well in their jobs. Usually, even repeated poor performance can be corrected in a short time with close supervision, training, motivation, or experience. However, some employees, whose work was once satisfactory, may demonstrate a declining pattern of job performance which does not improve with training, disciplinary procedures, adverse actions, or other supervisory techniques. These employees may be suffering from personal problems and in need of the benefits available from the EAP.

Always encourage self-referral. Employees with personal problems should feel able to seek assistance independently before the personal or job performance problems become crucial. The EAP staff will not initiate any contact with an employee's supervisor or management concerning self-referred employees, except with the employee's signed consent.

Nevertheless, supervisors may find it necessary to refer employees with a pattern of poor performance to the EAP. External EAP services are currently contracted by DPA and provide for a supervisory and management referral system. The EAP provider can assist supervisors in identifying performance trends that may be related to personal problems and provide guidance in confronting employees on their job performance or referring employees to the EAP. Managers and supervisors may contact CDF's EAP coordinator for current EAP contractor information.

Special qualifications and training are needed to diagnose personal problems. All referrals made by supervisors for counseling or treatment of an employee must be based solely on job performance or information volunteered by the employee, not on the supervisor's speculation regarding the possible problem. Supervisors should watch for and document observable symptoms, patterns or other factors affecting job performance such as:

- Excessive absenteeism;
- Tardiness;
- Missed deadlines;
- Accidents and mistakes;
- Inconsistent work patterns;
- Increased physical complaints and health problems;
- Significant personality or appearance changes;

- Excessive use of sick leave and health or accident benefits;
- Lack of concentration;
- Poor judgement;
- Noticeable performance changes.

Confrontation

This is often the most difficult step in an employee assistance program. Supervisors tend to give their employees a second chance, then another chance, and yet another chance to improve without intervention. However, if the employee's work is below standard, both the employee and the state benefit if the employee is required to and is assisted in improving his or her performance.

Supervisors can save the state millions of dollars, lost through absenteeism and low productivity, by early referral to the EAP. The supervisor may not be aware of a health or mental health problem of an employee that affects job performance. In some cases, the employee may not even be aware of a problem. By offering EAP services and complying with reasonable accommodation laws when applicable, supervisors protect themselves and the department from potential culpability or loss while making employees aware of available assistance.

Supervisors should refer employees to the EAP as soon as they are aware of a continuing problem with job performance or rule infraction. Referral may be made before or during any disciplinary procedures.

Supervisors should remember the following points when confronting and referring employees:

DO NOT:

- Try to diagnose the problem;
- Discuss personal problems, such as emotional problems with the employee.
 Avoid discussing the use of alcohol or other drugs unless abuse occurs on the job or the employee reports to work in an impaired condition;
- Moralize. Restrict your comments and conclusions to job performance;
- Be misled by sympathy-evoking tactics;
- Cover up for an employee. A misguided kindness can lead to a serious delay in real help reaching the employee;

- Discuss the employee's job performance problem with anyone except the EAP coordinator or your supervisor;
- Place information regarding the nature of the employee's personal problem in his or her personnel file.

<u>DO:</u>

- Remember that personal problems are often progressive and may get worse with time instead of better. Sometimes the only solution is outside help;
- Point out to the employee that EAP is an employee <u>benefit</u> program and that the state, as an employer, is concerned with the general health and well-being of all employees;
- Make it clear that, unless job performance improves, the employee's job is in jeopardy;
- Emphasize that all aspects of the EAP are completely confidential and that information regarding the nature of the employee's personal problem will not be added to his or her personnel file.

Disciplinary Action

If the employee rejects the offer of referral to the EAP or is participating in the program and work performance *does not improve*, the supervisor will initiate or continue normal disciplinary procedures as outlined by the State Personnel Board.

The EAP works in conjunction with disciplinary procedures and must not be used as a mechanism to replace these procedures. Employees referred to or participating in the EAP are expected to meet job performance standards and established work rules. EAP does not at any time limit a supervisor's right to discipline an employee.

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